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ABSTRACT

The seven articles in this focused journal issue are concerned with choosing books for teaching and the various constraints on those choices. The first article, by Richard Lederer, discusses George Orwell's "1984" and the principles of Newspeak. His article sets the tone for the next two articles: "Beware the Misuse of Guidelines" by J. Christopher Davis and James E. Davis, and "Taboos and an English Teacher's Response" by Mary Ann Rygiel. The articles by Nina Mikkelsen and Rennie Simson describe the long tradition, and the dilemma, of Afro-American literature, one in terms of children's literature and the other in terms of the nineteenth century. Ken Donelson's article focuses on three early censors--Thomas Bowdler, Anthony Comstock, and Thomas De Witt Talmage. The final article by Kristin Dittmann provides a bibliography of booklists to assist teachers in making materials selection and another bibliography on censorship. (HOD)

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the Leaflet

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THE LEAFLET

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The Leaflet

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Notes on this Issue:

This issue of *The Leaflet* is concerned with choosing books for teaching and the various constraints on those choices. Lederer ushers in 1984 with a discussion of Orwell's book and the principles of Newspeak. He sets the tone for the next two articles by the Davises and Rygiel, both of which address censorship and the schools. Mikkelsen and Simson describe the long tradition, and the dilemma, of Afro-American literature, one in terms of children's literature and the other in terms of the nineteenth century. Donelson's article reminds us of the grand tradition of censorship in the U.S. and the historical roots of today's censors. Dittmann has provided a bibliography of booklists to assist teachers in making choices, and a bibliography on censorship. Also included in this issue are poems from the finalists in the 1983 NEATE poetry contest. I also want to remind you that the NEATE Suggested Precollege Reading list is available in sets of 20 copies for $2.50 (includes postage); each list is a four-page pamphlet printed on high quality paper suitable for distributing to students, parents, and principals. Orders should be sent to NEATE, P.O. Box 234, Lexington, MA 02173.

Philip M. Anderson

Nineteen Eighty-Four and Newspeak

Richard Lederer

Welcome to 1984, a year that holds special significance for readers of George Orwell's classic modern novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In 1948, Orwell transposed the last two digits of the date, projected society thirty-six years into the future, and gave the world a new synonym for tyranny and totalitarianism.

In Orwell's nightmarish vision, the world, following an atomic war, has divided itself into three massive slave states — Eurasia, Oceania, and Eastasia. The three powers are about equal in strength and are continually at war. But it is a war that nobody can win.

In the governments absolute power has corrupted absolutely. Each dictatorship possesses an awesome understanding of mob psychology and thought control. The past is a pawn in the hands of present policy: when the rulers want to change history, they destroy all old books and periodicals and replace them with new ones. In effect, there is no past.

And it is the same with people. All dissent is outlawed. Citizens who dare to think anti-state thoughts are branded "unpersons" and sent off to be brutally re-educated.

The line is rigidly set by Big Brother, the black mustachioed dictator whose dark penetrating eyes stare down from posters everywhere. The flunkies of Big Brother's party are supervised by two-way telescreens in all rooms and public places. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU. A wrong facial expression can mean liquidation; there is no such thing as a private life.

But what of the words and phrases that persist in the citizens' minds? These have been labeled "crimethink," and the greatest of all thought crimes is called "ownlife." Crimethink is being stamped out by "doublethink," which teaches by numbing repetition the three slogans of the Party:

WAR IS PEACE
FREEDOM IS SLAVERY
IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH.

Doublethink is a mere preparation for "Newspeak," a modified form of "Oldspeak," or standard English, designed with catchall clichés and fewer words so as to make reflective and unorthodox thought impossible. Just as Shakespeare and the rest of the classics

have been removed to be translated into Newspeak, so the minds of the citizens are constantly being re-edited through successive editions of the Newspeak dictionary.

Nineteen Eighty-Four is the story of Winston Smith, a Party worker who commits the enormous crime of falling in love with a woman who also opposes the system. Inevitably discovered and arrested by the Thought Police, the two lovers undergo long periods of "re-education" through the Ministry of Love.

Released years later as a rehabilitated member of society, Smith learns not only to admit that 2 plus 2 is 5, but to believe it, with all that is left of his heart and soul. "Whatever the Party holds to be truth *is* truth. It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party."

For many readers, the most terrifying aspect of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not the technological gimmick of the two-way telescreens, but the government's ability to control thought by restricting its vehicle — language. Orwell emphasizes again and again the iron link between language and mind. If language is a window through which we look at the world, reducing the number and size of the windows limits our ability to view and deal with reality.

Welcome to 1984, a good year in which to ask ourselves if it is possible that our language is becoming polluted by the insidious influence of Newspeak.

One of the goals of Newspeak is to diminish the value of language by crippling the rich associations of older words and shrinking the size of the vocabulary. Newspeak is what happens when we destroy an excellent word like *chauvinist* and turn it into a narrowed feminist battle cry. Newspeak is what happens when the original meaning of *unique* — "one of a kind" — becomes identical with the word *unusual*, as in "That was one of the most unique parties I've ever attended." Newspeak is what happens when we can no longer distinguish the differences between words like *uninterested* and *disinterested*, *farther* and *further*, and *now* and *presently*.

Another characteristic of Newspeak is ease of speaking. Words are chosen because they trip smoothly on the tongue with a minimum of interference from the mind. As Orwell puts it, "A Party member called upon to make a political or ethical judgment should be able to spray forth the correct opinions as automatically as a machine gun spraying forth bullets."

Perhaps Orwell's description reminds you of the leaden expressions and prefabricated clichés that are so prominent in political pronouncements these days. The evidence of the terminal decay of meaning is all around us.

Newspeak is when a United States senator complains that "the bankers' pockets are bulging with the sweat of the honest working-

men." Newspeak is when a governor labels his state's budget defecit "an albatross we carry on our back" (which is just about as bad as having a monkey around your neck). Newspeak is when an ambassador to the United Nations counsels the Arabs and Israelis to "sit down and settle their differences like good Christian gentlemen."

And what about that deadly precursor to Newspeak called doublethink — the language that convinces, through obfuscation and euphemism, that WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, and IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH?

Doublethink is when people are no longer "fired;" instead, they are "reclassified," "deselected," or "outplaced." Doublethink is when the phrase "tax increase" is replaced by the phrase "revenue enhancement." Doublethink is when bombs become "devices," MX missiles become "Peacekeepers," invasions become "incursions," and wars become "police actions."

Nineteen Eighty-Four is not just a year or a novel. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a concept about the relationships between language and human freedom. Writers like George Orwell are not pessimistic determinists. Rather, they are prophetic thinkers who are concerned that our humanity be preserved and enlarged and that we not make our ultimate home on an anthill.

THE PRINCIPLES OF NEWSPEAK

(from George Orwell's appendix to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*)

Newspeak was the official language of Oceania and had been devised to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc, or English Socialism . . . It was expected that Newspeak would have finally superseded Oldpeak (or Standard English, as we should call it) by about the year 2050. Meanwhile it gained ground steadily, all Party members tending to use Newspeak words and grammatical constructions more and more in their everyday speech.

The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical thought — that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc — should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words.

Its vocabulary was so constructed as to give exact and often very subtle expression to every meaning that a Party member could properly wish to express, while excluding all other meanings and also the possibility of arriving at them by indirect methods. This was done partly by the invention of new words, but chiefly by eliminating undesirable words and by stripping such words as remained of unorthodox meanings, and so far as possible of all secondary meanings whatever.

To give a single example, the word free *still existed in Newspeak, but it could only be used in such statements as "This dog is free from lice" or*

"This field is free from weeds." It could not be used in its old sense of "politically free" or "intellectually free," since political and intellectual freedom no longer existed even as concepts, and were therefore of necessity nameless.

Quite apart from the suppression of definitely heretical words, reduction of vocabulary was regarded as an end in itself, and no word that could be dispensed with was allowed to survive. Newspeak was designed not to extend but to diminish the range of thought, and this purpose was indirectly assisted by cutting the choice of words down to a minimum.

St. Paul's School
Concord, NH

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The Leaflet invites articles for possible publication during the 1984-85 publication year. The theme for each issue is tentative, and articles on any facet of English teaching K-College are always welcome. The questions listed below are meant to be suggestive of possible topics for interested authors; the questions do not define or limit the possible topics for each issue. Information for authors and manuscript guidelines are inside the back cover.

Spring 1984: Uses of Literature
Deadline for Manuscripts: April 15, 1984

1) How should literature be used in the composition curriculum?
2) Does literature humanize our students? How? How do we know?
3) How can literary works be used in the reading curriculum?
4) What role does poetry play in the English curriculum?
5) Which approaches to teaching literature are working in your classroom?
6) What new approach to literature study have you tried recently? Did it work?
7) Has the trend toward publishing student writing had an effect on your classroom?
8) What books are your students reading and for what purpose?
9) Are you involved in any interdisciplinary teaching using literature?
10) How does literature study fit into the micromillennium?

Fall 1984: *Teacher Preparation in English*
Deadline for Manuscripts: August 15, 1984

1) What does a beginning teacher of English need to know?
2) What does a veteran English teacher need to learn?
3) How can teacher centers help develop English teaching skills?
4) What does the current teacher preparation program at your college look like?
5) What should a model English methods class look like?
6) How should the new technology be integrated into English teaching?
7) How can cooperating teachers and supervisors best assist beginning and experienced teachers?
8) Are state departments of education and accreditation organizations a help or a hindrance to teacher preparation?
9) Is the preparation model which emphasizes the study of literature a valid model?
10) Who should be responsible for the training of English teachers? Colleges? Schools?

Beware of the Misuse of Guidelines

J. Christopher Davis and James E. Davis

In determining appropriate selection processes for English teaching materials many school systems have developed or are developing guidelines as a part of their process. The use of guidelines in the selection of school books also increases with censorship pressure resulting from the trend to question what is being taught in schools. The use of guidelines can have both positive and negative results. Guideline committees can be the instrument of a school board, or individual school board member, or administrator feeling that books in schools are offensive or obscene and cause society's present ills and must be censored.

It is hardly debatable that inflexible guidelines stifle learning. Strict guidelines that do not allow outside material in the classroom limit the teacher's ability to expose students to some of the variety of other material that may be pertinent to the assigned work, and guidelines committees can be unnecessarily rigid. A Mehlville, Missouri guidelines committee provides a good example of this rigidity.

In the spring of 1981 the community was rocked with controversy because of a guidelines committee, as reported in *The South County Journal*, *The Globe-Democrat*, and *The St. Louis Post Dispatch*. At the suggestion of the North Central Evaluation Team a committee composed of a district teacher, two administrators, and two librarians submitted a report to the school board, which included a statement about students' "right to read," and a set of guidelines for selection of educational materials. The school board unanimously rejected the report of the original committee for being too liberal.

The focus of the controversy was over the possible censorship of books on moral or religious grounds. Several board members objected to obscene language and descriptions of sexual acts in literature that would have been permitted under the original proposed policy. Most attention was focused on issues involving family planning, family life, and abortion.

School board chairman Charles M. Meyer is a fascinating study of the characteristics of a censor of school material. He stated that although he did not want to impose his religious ideas on the district,

anti-religious things were not going to be allowed to come into the district. He opposed allowing people from abortion clinics to talk to family planning classes in the high school. Issues which concerned him most were family planning courses, allowing pro-abortion speakers to speak at schools, and the concept of humanism.

Complaining that the guidelines should be stiffer after the guidelines committee submitted its report Meyer said they should make a point of guarding the community's moral and religious values. He explained that instead of using the word censorship to describe the proposed guidelines one also could use selection, judgment or taste. Meyer said the board was not interested in burning books on the athletic field. He felt that his children should not be exposed to "both sides" of every issue. Board member Ron Earll agreed and did not want his children reading what he termed pornographic material in the classroom. Earll felt that guidelines were needed, but ones different from those in the original committee's report.

One of the committee's statements was that children should be allowed to make intelligent judgments of materials. Earll reasoned that children in the fourth grade could not make intelligent decisions on what they would be studying under the original guidelines.

The district superintendent Thomas Blades disagreed with the board's rejection of the committee's report and questioned the need for a new committee. Objecting to any changing of the makeup of the committee or its functions by the board, he said that the board of education is a policy-making body, and that it is not its job to approve every curriculum committee that is formed.

Some Mehlville parents opposed any efforts to censor materials, because they felt it would restrict their children's freedom of choice. One parent was quoted as saying, "You can't be like an ostrich and protect your children from reality all through school and then throw them out into the real world. It's not fair to them."

The Mehlville Community Teacher's Association expressed concern that the action instigated by Meyer and Earll could lead to censorship of school materials. The association cautioned the board that any attempt to censor school materials would violate a ten year old agreement giving teachers and administrators the right to dictate the selection of teaching materials.

The American Civil Liberties Union watched the situation in Mehlville closely in response to several appeals by parents concerned with political and religious freedoms, and the First Amendment. Director of the St. Louis office, Joyce Armstrong, felt that attempts to censor specific books on moral or religious grounds could violate the First Amendment to the Constitution. She expressed concern about the chilling effect on the faculty, that they were going to be watched about the materials used in the classroom.

Concerned with the presence of what they termed humanism in the public classroom curriculum, an organization of pro-family, anti-abortion citizens advocated control over classroom materials. Mary Kempf, the president of this group called Family Life Educators, was quoted as saying, "Humanism is an atheistic religion, which uses psychology on children to change the way they think. Our main concern is to make people aware of what humanism is doing to our children."

The Mehlville case of the use and abuse of guidelines is by no means unique. It shows a strong attempt to manipulate the curriculum in the schools by *removing* or by *not allowing into* the schools materials on subjects some citizens disagree with. Other citizens advocate guidelines to insure that material they have special interest in *is included*. A major job of the teaching profession in the next few years will be to work to see that when guidelines are used they will be used in the positive way of making it more likely that the best materials *are in* rather than the negative way of *keeping out* what some individuals do not like.

Ohio University
Athens, OH

To An English Teacher

So far, lady,
on a scale of A to F,
you get the big flower.
I'd give this arm
if you'd teach me one thing useful
—like how to keep from getting pregnant
or what is safe to drink
or how to make some money
or how to feel full on a dollar
or whether any job is worth it
or just what you mean
by this "difficult ordinary happiness."

Elizabeth Hahn
Connecticut

Taboos and an English Teacher's Response

Mary Ann Rygiel

The American Library Association has set forth its opposition to censorship.[1] The February 1977 *English Journal* had a forum on the topic: Censorship, the Law, and the Teacher of English. U.S. Courts have wrestled with the question of censorship in a variety of cases before them in recent years. On June 25, 1982 the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a significant decision in a case which originated in February 1976 when the school board of Island Trees, New York, removed eleven books from the school library. Even though this case is decided, the subject of censorship is not exhausted. The Supreme Court definition of the term "obscene" in 1957[2] did not prevent the flood of litigation we have seen in the past twenty-five years. In the Island Trees case there was a plurality opinion but not a majority opinion, and the Court directed that a New York federal district court which had previously dismissed the case must now hear it. So it is safe to assume that the Supreme Court's action in the Island Trees case, in which it rejects removal of library books by local school boards attempting to prescribe orthodoxy "in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion,"[3] will require many local acts of interpretation regarding particular texts.

As long as Americans come from different ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, censorship will remain a live issue in American public schools. The difficulties are neither strictly regional nor are they limited to one academic discipline. However, not all school disciplines give rise to the same impulse by parents to try to control or re-direct course content because of a potential for contaminating children's minds. Mathematics, by virtue of its purity as a universally understood (at least in principle) symbol system, is most unlikely to ignite parent protest groups. A student's exposure to, say, the quadratic formula, or to a mathematical definition of infinity, would hardly constitute a threat to family values or student morals. Music education is almost as likely to be free of censorship efforts by various parent groups. However, we witnessed the furor in Israel in 1981 when Zubin Mehta, music director of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, played part of "Tristan and Isolde" as an

encore the second evening of the 46th season of the Philharmonic. You may think, "No one here will say 'You cannot play Wagner' either at a concert or in a school setting." Yet, young American blacks have expressed displeasure at the playing of "Dixie" in the South at football games. Still, if mathematics and music education are relatively free from parental censorship efforts, then social studies, health and biological sciences are not free. In Alabama parent groups had one social studies book removed from the list of accepted school books "because it stated Russia has made great industrial progress in recent years."[4] Another book was successfully challenged on the grounds that an illustration of a father washing dishes undermines the family and traditional family roles. The state of Arkansas enacted legislation, later struck down by U.S. District Judge William Overton, requiring the teacher of creationism in public schools to "give balanced treatment" to "creation science." The attorney general of Arkansas plans to appeal.[5] Even university faculty are not immune from pressure groups. In California, a university instructor of a course entitled "Women and their Bodies" was suspended after "an evangelical Christian group complained that her course promoted lesbianism."[6]

The content of the English curriculum is least free from parental scrutiny and displeasure. Why is the English curriculum especially vulnerable to complaint? And along what lines can English teachers construct their defenses?

The first question can be answered by considering three categories of "objectionable" material, that is, material objectionable to some person or group of persons in a given community. The first category contains taboo words. In Pennsylvania, Studs Terkel's book *Working* stirred up controversy over its inclusion in a high school course for seniors. Parents complained about Terkel's book because of some individual words used by the speakers in some chapters.[7] Works which contain taboo words, especially contemporary plays, short stories, and poems, are far more likely to be included in an English syllabus than in any other discipline's syllabus. Since 1980, for example, parents in Massachusetts have criticized Richard Wright's *Native Son*, parents in Illinois have criticized Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, parents in Pennsylvania have criticized J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, and parents in California have criticized all of Judy Blume's books, all for their profanity.

The second category of potentially objectionable material contains explicit, detailed portrayals of behavior, especially sexual or violent behavior, considered enticing and dangerous as a norm for young people. Judy Blume's book *Forever* is a good example of a book containing explicit description of teen-age sexual exploration. Its hardcover appearance in 1975, followed by its paperback

appearance in 1976, sent students stampeding to school libraries and to book stores." While librarians locally complain that the book immediately falls open to "spicy" passages, some parents make the same complaint with far less amusement in their voices. Works which depict individual experience in such an area of personal growth are far more likely to be included in the English curriculum than in any other. The clinical treatment given to anatomy and sexual function in a health or general science course, even in its neutrality a censorable topic to some parents, appears to give way in some adolescent literature to positive advocacy of early sexual activity. This second category of potentially objectionable material, then, depicts human behavior, especially sexual behavior or violent behavior, often in a sympathetic way.

The third category of objectionable material contains all the seductive ideas in the world which do not agree with—or cannot co-exist with—the objector's values and beliefs. Parents have sought to exclude such works as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* on the grounds that it is "pro-communist," or *Lord of the Flies* on the grounds that it is "demoralizing in as much as it implies that man is little more than an animal."[9] The textbooks in history or science classes are, of course, not neutral in their stance towards their subject. But we English teachers may be victims of our own success. The public recognizes more readily the advocacy of a point of view by authors of materials read for an English class than they do for materials in other classes. The public has searched out themes, but does not always state them with the subtlety and precision an author deserves.

What is the response of an English teacher? I am not afraid of printed taboo words. In fact, the discussion of a dictionary maker's practice of labelling words according to level or style of usage may entail the use of a specimen for scrutiny. My main objection to taboo words is not that they are degrading or dirty, but rather downright dull. They generally are used unimaginatively by speakers in our culture. Some are used as all-purpose adjectives, expressing every kind of positive or negative condition of an object, relative to almost any imaginable attribute. They are used to express wonderment (Damn!), annoyance (Shit!) and a host of other emotional reactions. Rather than avoiding the issue, I think we should confront it straight on. Ask a class what they would think of a person whose vocabulary and reactions to events around them were restricted to a few lame words like wow!, cool!, and neat! Point out that such a speaker either has a mental or linguistic deficiency. But for the sake of cases where the words in question are used in marvelously witty ways, such as Dogberry's insistence in *Much Ado About Nothing* that he be written down an ass, let us not dismiss books with taboo words on the basis of the words alone.

Towards books such as Blume's, our reaction should be based, not on subject matter alone, but on treatment of that subject matter. I view subject matter as nearly neutral. A book becomes objectionable when the subject is treated in a way intended to provoke univocal response. In other words, pornography becomes pornography because a neutral subject is given pornographic treatment. What is such treatment? I believe that underlying visual and verbal pornography is a tendency to see the intended audience as Skinnerian rats or pigeons capable of only one response. The makers of pornography only want one response, rapt but not thoughtful. I could not teach a book in which I recognized that the author had this underlying concept of the intended audience. Ken Donelson says of Blume's book:

> . . . the book's sexual explicitness seems forced and mechanical, almost as if she [Blume] loaded a hypodermic needle with four-letter words and then frequently and arbitarily injected them into the story. Rather than being an honest book about sex today, *Forever* is reminiscent of a creaky Betty Cavanna or Anne Emery novel, with four-letter words injected here and there to create a very much with-it book for a with-it generation of girls (. . . I wondered for a moment why Blume hadn't titled her book *A Penis Called Ralph.*)[9]

A good contrast to Blume's book is Isabelle Holland's *The Man Without a Face.* It deals with a homosexual encounter with delicacy and discretion. Sexual behavior is a secondary aspect of the theme of human need. The book treats the theme of loneliness, through a boy's need for a male friend and role model.

The third category of potentially objectionable material—alien ideas—is more elusive than the other two. Though two people may not agree on how taboo words should be handled in the classroom, they could agree on what words are included in a list of taboo words. In fact, a good, recent dictionary can act as arbiter. The same two individuals could agree that a work contains a depiction of sexual behavior, though they may not agree on their estimate of the quality of the work. However, the same two individuals, when confronted with one work, may disagree radically as to what ideas are contained in the work, and as to whether the work espouses or denies those ideas.

How can we defend the works in this bulging but amorphous category? To me, the dangerous materials for adolescents are in this category. Ideas are dangerous. Ideas challenge complacency and smugness.

What are our goals when we use materials that some parents find objectionable? It cannot be that we are simply trying to goad some staid parents. One goal is to make students aware of their cultural heritage. The Orwellian vision has become a cliché. Everyone, news

anchormen, politicians, the man on the street, speak familiarly—and often—of doublespeak, Big Brother, and 1984. Students should not grow up in ignorance of their cultural heritage. A second goal is the expansion of our students' imaginative faculties and sympathies. When we read books by and about other groups and their lifestyles and values, we develop insight into and tolerance for people who are different. A third goal we English teachers share is the enlargement of our students' aesthetic sensibilities. Young children think spinach is yucky. Adults have learned to appreciate a properly prepared custard base, fresh cooked spinach, and horseradish and nutmeg flavorings that go into making a delectable spinach souffle. We want our students to know there are more beauties in life than automobiles, McDonald's golden arches, and television commercial slogans.

What outcomes are possible? I would hope students would develop their own inner controls about their reading material. I would also hope that they will examine their own values and group identity. If they can thoughtfully affirm those values, this is a positive, desired outcome.

I believe we have no right to claim our thoughts as "thoughts" unless we challenge them sometimes. If we never subject them to examination, they are something other than thoughts. They are more like automatic can openers, whirring, utilitarian, uni-functional. This is the most profound issue involved in censorship. Can we lead our students to construct a thoughtful argument on behalf of democracy, or will we leave their beliefs convenient, comfortable, and narrow? Are we, and they, religious—or atheistic—by thoughtful choice, or by inheritance and habit? To censor ideas is to censor our students' right and duty to grow as thoughtful persons.

Notes

[1]Though divisions within the Association exist on the question of "selectivity" with regard to sexually or ethnically discriminatory material (see for example Donnarae MacCann, "Children's Books in a Pluralistic Society," *Wilson Library Bulletin*, 51, No. 2 (1976), 154-62), the Library Bill of Rights is opposed to censorship of materials. Also, the American Library Association sponsors the publication of the *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*.

[2]See Stanley I. Mour, "Censorship and the Schools: A Different Perspective," *English Journal*, 66, No. 2 (1977), p. 19.

[3]For this phrase from the Court's opinion, and for the factual matters of the Court's opinion, see "NCTE to You," *English Journal*, 71, 6 (1982), 93-94.

[4]In a speech to Opelika City School teachers, State of Alabama Superintendent of Education Dr. Wayne Teague cited this and the following example and referred to censorship as "possibly the biggest threat to you and your children today." See Roxanne A. Venable, "State Superintendent Warns Teachers of Future Battles," *Opelika-Auburn Daily News*, March 2, 1982, p. 1.

[5]J. Raloff, "'Creation-science' law is struck down," *Science News*, 121, No. 2 (1982), p. 20.

[6]*Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 1, 1982, p. 3.

The student response to Terkel was, in general, different from that of the parent complainants. When Terkel visited the Girard, Pennsylvania school system involved, he received two standing ovations at a student assembly at the high school. In addition, the Junior Class wrote Terkel a letter of thanks from the "youth of today." See editorial, "Studs in Girard," *The Nation*, 234, No. 9 (1982), 259-260.

[5]Blume is the top-selling current and backlist author for Bradbury Press, a press which publishes only hardcover children's books. She receives more mail than the rest of the house combined. Her sales in 1978 totalled six million in all titles, hardcover and paperback combined. See "After 10 Years, Bradbury Press Is Thriving On the Books that 'Talk to Young Listeners,'" *Publishers Weekly*, 213, No. 9 (1978), pp. 143-144. The paperback edition of *Forever* is in its 25th printing. Blume's adult novel *Wifey*, which appeared in 1978, had 3,010,000 paperback copies in print as of 1980. See *Publishers Weekly*, 217, No. 7 (1980), p. 44.

[6]The charge against Orwell's novel was reported in the *Jackson County Floridian*, January 14, 1981, that against Golding's novel in *Asheville Citizen* (North Carolina), May 7, 1981.

[7]Kenneth L. Donelson, "YA Literature Comes of Age," *Wilson Library Bulletin*, 52, No. 3 (1977), 246.

Auburn Junior High School
Auburn, AL

Chemical Reaction
(On the Gift of an Antique Crystal Vase)

Roses slow unpetaled, now less than hips;
Daisies, now blind, soft-winked day's keen black eyes;
Love grown by palings of the past still keeps,
For stains in vases outlive those fleeting skies.

Yellow-stains above the silver base
Shall overlap with summers of our own:
The unknown juices of these past Julys
With blooms unseen and fragrance yet ungrown.

Pale test-tube rings attest to former use—
Some alchemist with tricks arcane kept wet
The long-stemmed fragile days of little Kews—
The evanescent hues that, thirsty, wept.

This gift can conjure gardens long ago;
So soon will droop, ne're die, the rose we grow.

Ian Veitenheimer
New Hampshire

Dilemmas of Censorship and the Black Child

Nina Mikkelsen

To many, the word "censorship" means a book or subject being banned, rejected, or repressed (the reader left with no story) or passages being rewritten, deleted, or modified, either by editor or writer (the reader getting a different story). More subtle censorship occurs, however, when a subject has been misrepresented or limited in scope or variety (the reader getting a story, but not the whole story or the real story). Of the many subjects with a history of repression, modification, or misrepresentation in literature, the subject of the black child has for many decades incurred both obvious and subtle forms of censorship, the result of continuous racial conflict and the longstanding situation of such books having so often been authored, illustrated, edited, published, marketed, even purchased by members of the white, rather than the black, population.

Viewing the literary black child in historic perspective helps today's teacher, faced with outside pressures of censorship yet committed to choosing quality literature for all children, to gain a better understanding of the cultural conflicts that have plagued the subject through the years and to see the weaknesses and strengths of individual portraits. As Basil Bernstein has pointed out, "if the contexts of learning—the examples, the reading books—are not contexts which are triggers for the children's imaginings, are not triggers for the children's curiosity and explorations in his family and community, then the child is not at home in the educational world . . . if the culture of the teacher is to become part of the consciousness of the child, then the culture of the child must first be in the consciousness of the teacher."[1]

The history of the black child in literature has often revealed the most irresponsible kind of censorship, that based on the denial of some vital area of human experience and resulting in the black child's total eclipse or total misrepresentation. Before 1900, black children were usually seen as background figures and minor comic characters in stories of plantation life. After 1900, they were seen as major comic characters, beginning with Helen Bannerman's *Little Black Sambo* (Stokes, 1905), in which a family supposedly of India appeared in illustrations with straight hair, large accentuated

lips, and the mother wearing an Afro-American bandana. As Selma Lanes hypothesizes, Bannerman, having lived in West Africa as a child, the daughter of a Scottish clergyman, and in India as an adult, the wife of a physician, confused African and Indian racial and cultural traits when she wrote her story.[2] In the years to come, however, the story was to undergo numerous reprintings, for all its incongruities; and in 1931, RCA Victor even produced a record to accompany the book.

One year before, in 1930, Erick Berry, the wife of a British government officer stationed in West Africa, had produced *Penny-Whistle* (Macmillan, 1930) containing another mixture of African setting and Afro-American stereotypes. (Although Berry's child lived in a "little mud house with a thatched roof on the edge of the jungle," his "pappy" is clothed in minstrel style black silk hat and cane.) Of the same year, Annie Vaughan Weaver's *Frawg* (Lippincott, 1930) is endowed with consistency of character and setting. Five year old Frawg tries to eat twenty watermelons, makes a rope bridle, rides the hogs, and speaks in the Southern rural dialect ("Us can't starve dem pigs no mo"). As a white child, Frawg might have merely seemed a comic prankster, but with his caricatured lips, braided hair, and accentuated speech patterns, he reflected ante-bellum pickanniny patterns of the past, and alongside Sambo and Penny-Whistle, foreshadowed the stereotypical images of later books.

In 1935, for example, Inez Hogan produced a picturebook version of Sara Cone Bryant's "noodlehead" story, *Epaminondas and His Auntie* (Houghton-Mifflin), portraying Epaminondas as black and thus fostering associations in the reader's mind of the black child and the traditional American Lazy-Jack noodlehead: barefooted, pigeon-toed, gluttonous, comical, and foolish. White reviewers had no complaints about books such as Hogan's and Weaver's however. Speaking of another picturebook by Hogan, *Nicodemus and the Little Black Pig* (Dutton, 1934), in its 7th printing by 1936, *The New Haven Journal-Courier* praised the "pickannies" as "altogether delightful," and *The Philadelphia Inquirer* declared the books "very good for little readers."[3]

English author Hugh Lofting wrote a glowing Afterword to *Frawg*, attesting to the authenticity of Weaver's fictional characters. Not only could she draw pictures of "coloured people," he wrote, "but she really knows them. She was brought up among them from the time she was born" (in Selma, Alabama). Thus her stories were "living moving glimpses of the life, thoughts and talk of Southern children." And in many ways they were. Ellis Credle's *Across the Cotton Patch* (Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1935), set in her native region of Eastern North Carolina, reveals both black and white children eating watermelon, riding hogs, and declaring "Sho nuff." But the white children in these books did not continuously speak

an unreadable comic dialect and they were not marked by what Credle now says was the "custom" of the early thirties: "to draw black children in a sort of caricature, stemming in large part from minstrel shows which spread the image of Blacks as amusing characters not to be taken seriously."[4]

At the same time that white reviewers were praising insensitive creations of the black child, two prominent members of the Harlem literary establishment, Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, had discovered in *Popo and Fifina, Children of Haiti* (Macmillan, 1932), a more positive way to depict the black child. Hughes' poetic language effectively complemented Bontemps' understanding of both childhood playfulness and parental concerns. ("Langston had the story and . . . I had the children," Bontemps, a father of six, later said.)[5] The graceful silhouettes of E. Simms Campbell also conveyed the humor of spirited children as well as the dignity of Haitian adults in their daily lives.

Bontemps went on in the 30's without Hughes to produce more books about the black child, at the same time searching for a more realistic way to depict the black child's speech. From a total use of standard English in *Popo and Fifina*, he reverted to moderate use of regional Alabama dialect in *You Can't Pet a Possum* (Morrow, 1934), finally producing in *Sad Faced Boy* (Houghton, 1937) an early version of Black English, as he moved from reproducing phonemic levels of speech to the replication of syntactic levels. Bontemps' books are perhaps even more important, however, for their authenticity. Here for the first time, black children could read books written by a black adult who had observed both the segregated worlds of rural Alabama as well as of urban Harlem.

In addition to Bontemps, however, several white writers of the 30's were attempting to tell a more accurate story of the black child. Finding dialect difficult for her own kindergarten students in Atlanta, Eva Knox Evans eliminated it in the stories she wrote of the black child, *Araminta* (Minton Balch, 1935) and *Jerome Anthony* (Putnam, 1936).[6] Primary teachers were also expressing the same feelings about dialect to Credle, and she was discovering from members of the black community that the way she had been portraying black children in illustrations was not well accepted. For her next book, she eliminated the use of dialect and substituted photographs for drawings in order to eliminate any question of caricature. Consequently, *The Flop-Eared Hound* (Oxford University Press, 1938) stands today as an important early twentieth century regional document.

More photographic picturebooks followed Credle's books, including Stella Sharpe's *Tobe* (University of North Carolina Press, 1939), another realistic story of rural Southern life, and Ellen Tarry and Marie Ets' *My Dog Rinty* (Viking, 1946), in which Northern

black families could be seen advancing economically, in great contrast to the simple, fixed existence of Sharpe's and Credle's earlier books. Both books, however, revealed an historic picture of segregated worlds, whether of North Carolina or Harlem. Thus they foreshadowed issues that were to dominate (and trouble) books of the black child for the next two decades.

Ellen Tarry's *Hezekiah Horton* (Viking, 1942) and Marguerite de Angeli's *Bright April* (Doubleday, 1946) are representative of changes occurring in the 40's, when black children have been given a more serious role to play. Black author Tarry stresses the new economic possibilities for black children. Hezekiah dreams of someday owning an automobile and, as the book ends, is told that someday he can become the white man's chauffeur. White author De Angeli educates the white child in values of brotherhood at the same time she informs the black child about white expectations and the politics of accommodation. The black child April aspires to own a hat shop someday but is told that "many people cannot do the things they want to do" and that "homely work is important too." If she is neat, clean, respectable, pleasant and "extra careful," her mother tells her, she will make friends "wherever she goes."

De Angeli's intent, as she later stated, was to create a character that white children could remember as a friend and thus to help them "see all people whose skin might be different from their own, as people like themselves."[7] (April's skin is described as the color of coffee with good cream added, and De Angeli's illustrations, although showing no caricature of race reveal no identification with her culture either.) Black critics today, however, reject the book as reflecting the white social mores of the 40's (that the more like the white child the black child could be, the better), rather than the needs of the black child then or now.[8]

With Georgene Faulkner's *Melindy's Happy Summer* (Julian Messner, 1949), the illustrations (by black artist Elton Fax) give a better indication of racial traits, but the message of text remains the same: all children may be brothers under the skin but the black child must again adjust to the white power structure and white modes of thinking. Melindy, to sing the role of Gretel in the summer camp opera, must cut her braids, wear make-up, and a wig: "It was impossible that Gretel could be black," thinks Melindy. "Gretel is a beautiful little blond girl."

Many books of the 50's and 60's, like May Justus' *New Boy in School* (Hastings House, 1963), spoke of the problem of integrating schools and neighborhoods; and because most of the authors were writing from a white perspective, the mood was similar to that of the 40's: injustice usually was given quick and simple cures ("Colored is just another color," says the lone bigot at the end of Jerrold Beim's

Swimming Hole, Morrow, 1950), and optimism prevailed. The attitude of black writers was considerably different. Ed Williams of Lorenze Graham's *South Town* (Follett, 1958) is described by the author as the typical, quiet human being whose story is never told; but even he is reduced to hatred by the bigotry of his white employer. "He's got too much dirt in him for me to go near him," Williams says at the end of the book. "And I got too much hate in me."

At this time, black children in picturebooks were largely in eclipse, or they were simplistically drawn as shaded white faces, as in the books of Justus and Beim. Photographic books had run their course for the present and still no picture-book illustrator had emerged with a way for satisfactorily depicting the black child. Twenty years before this time, however, in 1941, a young art student, Ezra Keats, had clipped the photograph of a four year old black child from the pages of *Life Magazine*. "His expressive face," says Keats today, "his body attitudes, the very way he wore his clothes totally captivated me." In the early 60's, Keats felt ready to write his first book, and he decided it would be a story about this child. From the color Keats painted him, Peter can be seen as a black child, but *The Snowy Day* depicts the adventures of any growing child making new discoveries, and in 1962 it was a landmark book (and a Caldecott winner the following year) because for the first time a black child could be seen as Everychild.

In the wake of a burgeoning civil rights movement and conflicts of school and housing integration, Keats' universal black child satisfied white liberals who wanted a more positive image for the black child, yet did not want to see ethnic differences accentuated. Others, however, felt more needed to be done. Significant research, conducted by Nancy Larrick in 1965, indicated that only 6.7%, or 349, out of 5,206 children's trade books for a three year period, contained any reference in text or illustration to the black child.[9]

Keats followed *A Snowy Day* with *Whistle for Willie* (Viking) in 1964 and *Peter's Chair* (Harper) in 1967, two more stories of universal experiences—a child's learning to whistle and learning to live with a new sibling. In the same year, 1967, Elizabeth Starr Hill produced another small classic of the urban child, *Evan's Corner* (Holt). The theme was also a universal one—a child desiring a pet and a private space of his own, but the lower socio-economic status of this urban family corresponded realistically to the problems many urban black families were facing, and similar to Keats, white artist Nancy Grossman was also able to produce representative yet positive ethnic features of a black child as well as positive pictures of a black family.

Also in 1967 Elaine Konigsberg wrote and illustrated *Jennifer, Hecate, Macbeth, McKinley, and Me, Elizabeth*, about a friendship

between a white and a black child. As Konigsberg explains, her family had recently moved to a new area and her daughter was in a new situation. "I looked out my window one afternoon and saw [what was to become] the character of my new story, a schoolmate of my daughter, walking below me down the street. They were both new in the school, and I wanted to show the loneliness of two classmates, one isolated because of her color, the other because she is a stranger." Konigsberg was never really to become acquainted with the black child she watched from her window for her daughter and the black child were not to become best friends in life as they did in the story. Thus although Jennifer is a child depicted as proud, resourceful, and a leader, these traits are not dramatized against any background of black experiences, and whereas the white child's family is seen clearly and easily and often humorously, Jennifer's family is seen only distantly (even her father's interest in growing a watermelon, if considered a trait, reveals more the possibility of the author's having internalized negative images or stereotypes of the past, rather than having made perceptive observations of a group of people).

A Newbery Honor winner, Konigsberg's book has been considered aesthetically "good," but whether the book was of any great value for the black child of its era is questionable, especially when compared to another book, published in this same year, 1967, by Virginia Hamilton who was black and whose book signaled a change in perspective for the black child in children's books. *Zeely*, containing handsome illustrations by Symeon Shimin is the story of a young girl, Geeder, who, in visiting her uncle's farm one summer, fantasizes that her neighbor, 6 feet tall Zeely Tabor, is a Watusi Queen. By the time Geeder realizes the extent of her illusion, she has discovered through Zeely the beauty and mystery of her own African heritage and a great deal about pride, courage, and self-esteem. "It's not what a person stoops to do," says Geeder, as the story ends. "It's what's inside you . . . when you walk down a dark road way late at night."

Nineteen sixty-nine saw a return to the photographic picturebook, with *J.T.* by Jane Wagner (Van Nostrand), a story of a child growing stronger in the midst of ghetto conditions; *Black is Beautiful* by Ann McGovern (Four Winds), a poetic concept book with a message, and *Sweet Pea, A Black Girl Growing Up in the Rural South* by Jill Krementz (Harcourt), a photo-documentary of a nine year old living in a large single parent family in Montgomery, Alabama and still, in the late 60's, attending a segregated school. Also in 1969, Black poet June Jordan in *Who Look At Me* (Crowell) was underscoring the racial differences that had previously been evaded ("I am black alive and looking at you . . . I trust you will remember how we tried to live/ above the pocket deadly need to please/ and how so many of us

died there on our knees"); and nineteen year old black artist John Steptoe was publishing his first striking picturebook. *Stevie* (Harper) is the memorable story of sibling jealousy; but here, unlike earlier books, universal theme is dramatized in terms of ethnic differences. And as with Bontemps some thirty-seven years earlier, the language replicated the dialogue Steptoe had heard black children speak. "Sometimes people get on your nerves," Robert says. "They don't mean it or nothing' but they just bother you. Why I gotta put up with him? My momma only had one kid. I used to have a lot of fun before old stupid came to live with us."

Ethnic characteristics, illustrations, language, and a realistic Harlem setting also fill the pages of Steptoe's next two books, *Uptown* (Harper, 1970) and *Train Ride* (Harper, 1971). The children in these books often appear as miniature adults—serious, belligerent, even sad, the colors adding a bright solemn intensity, but it is the black family that is also clearly delineated in Steptoe's books—the frightened parents of missing children in *Train Ride* and Robert's mother in *Stevie*, who sits in her sturdy bulk, comforting the fearful child she has taken in.

In 1970, the black family was also delineated in a book for older children. Set in the late nineteenth century, William Armstrong's Newbery Award winning *Sounder* (Harper) is the story of a black family's courage in the face of rural Southern injustice. Armstrong, a white writer, received negative comments from black critics who felt he did not really understand the black experience (unlike the heroic family dog, the black characters were left unnamed and remained quite passive in the face of white cruelty).[10] White critics countered that unnamed characters helped to maintain a mythic tone, and in the particular historical period represented, black families had no choice but to remain passive in the face of a white power structure.[11]

As Keats completed his seventh book about Peter in the early 70's, he also drew a blistering attack from black critic, Ray Shepard. Keats was not telling the real story of a black child, said Shepard, for the color of his characters was never relevant to the story. If white writers saw equality only in terms of similarity, the theory went, they could never really tell the black child's story. Thus the black child needed black writers, like Steptoe, who could expose a reader to different ethnic experiences and show that children could be equal and still be different.[12]

The notion that the black child might have separate feelings because of separate experiences was a new one to white writers who for so long had followed the credo of the 40's—that all people have similar basic emotions, a fact more significant than differences in heritage, environment, or training. In *Black Pilgrimage* (Lothrop, 1971), however, black artist Tom Feelings tells of turning down

many jobs illustrating children's books in the 60's because he felt white writers of these books were presenting a white view and thus a distorted vision of black life. Returning from a visit to Ghana, Feelings and his wife Muriel produced in 1970, *Zamani Goes to Market* (Seabury), a story of African family life, and subsequently, both an African alphabet and counting book, all three works written to provide positive representations of the black heritage and revealing his new method, conceived in Africa, for illustrating the black child (combining black ink, white tempera with tissue paper overlay and final ink wash, in order to reveal for children the feeling of the hot sun upon the black skin).

Feelings' attitude that children needed more books with positive black images was also to be echoed by many other black writers in the 70's. When Eloise Greenfield joined the staff of the District of Columbia Black Writers Workshop in 1971, Sharon Bell Mathis was the head of the Children's Literature Division. Hearing Mathis speak "so passionately" about the need for good black books for children, Greenfield said, was contagious. "Once I realized the full extent of the problems, it became urgent for me to try, along with others, to build a large collection of books for children."[13]

Mathis was at that time completing *Teacup Full of Roses* (Viking, 1972), a story of an inner-city family and the tensions ensuing from adolescent use of drugs. It was followed in 1974 by *Listen For the Fig Tree* (Viking) a story involving the problems of a blind teenager who must cope with poverty, an alcoholic mother, and an attempted rape; and one year later, in 1975, by *The Hundred Penny Box* (Viking), the story of a young boy coming to terms with his great aunt's feelings of displacement and finally her death.

The books that Greenfield began to produce in the mid 70's were very different from Mathis' scripts of stark realism. In examining universal experience, the kernal of which was black experience, Greenfield, in 1974, produced *She Come Bringing Me That Baby Girl* (Lippincott), a picturebook about sibling rivalry (illustrations by John Steptoe), the dialogue written in Black English, and *Sister* (Crowell), a novel depicting the black family in a myriad of experiences, as a young girl discovers friends, family, music, and laughter can bridge the bad times of a father's death, an older sister's alienation, and her own struggles of emerging adolescence. In the poems of *Honey I Love* (Crowell, 1978), a child describes herself as "a leaf turning red, a loaf of brown bread," tells of "going down the country where the church folks like to meet" and remembers that "Harriet Tubman didn't take no stuff/ Wasn't scared of nothing neither."

Another poet of the black experience, Lucille Clifton, produced *The Black BC's* (Dutton, 1970), an alphabetical collage of black cultural facts and statistics about slavery, jazz, black authors, black

cowboys, and the stories of Everett Anderson in which a young boy adjusts to a fatherless home, and at the same time begins to take pride in his racial identity, learning, as his mother tells him in *Everett Anderson's Year* (Holt, 1974) to "walk tall in the world," for "the year is new and so are the days."

By the mid seventies, a flood of books depicting the black child had been produced in America, even the noted author, James Baldwin, making a contribution in *Little Man, Little Man, A Story of Childhood* (Dial, 1976), unique for its depiction of Black English, not only in dialogue but in narration as well. But a study by Jean Chall in 1975, replicating Larrick's research of the mid 60's, showed that although the percentage of books revealing black children in text or illustration, had doubled from 6.7 to 14.4% in 10 years, 86% of children's trade books continued to reveal a totally white world.[14] And still white writers were producing books of the black child that black critics were rejecting.

Mercer Mayer created *Liza Lou and the Yeller Belly Swamp* (Parents Magazine Press, 1976), to show that a "cute, sassy, black girl could survive by her wits" in a swamp filled with "nasty creatures" (including a pale Swamp Haunt wearing Confederate Hat), but the book was disliked by the black community, he says, because the folksy language and the picture of a black family eating pancakes evoked memories of earlier negative images.

More recent criticism of books by white writers such as Bette Greene (*Philip Hall Likes Me, I Reckon Maybe*, Dial, 1974, and *Get On Out Of Here, Philip Hall*, Dial, 1981) and Louise Fitzhugh (*Nobody's Family is Going to Change*, Farrar, 1974), has centered around the matter of authenticity. According to Rudine Sims, author of *Substance and Shadow: Afro-American Experience in Contemporary Children's Fiction* (NCTE, 1982), most white writers are unable to replicate the style and grammar of Black speech, some like Fitzhugh are unable to recreate credible actions and attitudes for their non-white characters, particularly in scenes involving black families and black peer groups; and even in the decade of the 70's, some like Greene have continued to exhibit patronizing attitudes toward black characters. The best books for children, according to Sims (the most authentic and therefore those nearly always created by black writers) are those in which both the text and pictures consciously seek to mirror the "shared collective memories" of the writers producing them—memories and experiences of Afro-American heritage and history, the sense of community, particularly within families, and the determination for survival, books such as many black writers in the late 70's were producing.

In a trilogy of the Logan family, for example (*Song of the Trees*, Dial, 1975; *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Dial, 1977; and *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*, Dial, 1981), Mildred Taylor concentrated on the

Black world of rural Mississippi in the 1930's and the principles upon which black parents taught their children to survive. Her aim she said, in her Newbery Award acceptance speech of 1977, was "to paint a truer picture of Black people" than she has seen depicted in the books of her youth by writers who did not know about the black experience and therefore failed to capture the real meaning of it.[15] Greenfield's *Childtimes* (Crowell, 1979), is a three way collaborative memoir of grandmother, mother, and daughter, and the history of her own Parmele, North Carolina family, a sociological, economic, folkloristic, and literary portrait of the American culture. Growing up black was also the focus of Clifton's *The Times They Used to Be* (Holt, 1974), in which a child's mother tells her own childhood story, and *The Lucky Stone* (Delacorte, 1979), in which black folklore permeates a story about the fortunate effects a magic stone has upon three generations of female characters.

More recent notable picture books have been Camille Yarbrough's *Cornrows* (Coward McCann, 1979), illustrations by black artist Carole Byard, explaining an ancient African hairstyle as symbol of courage, wisdom and strength; Eloise Greenfield and Tom Feelings' *Daydreamers* (Dial, 1981), poetry of children "thinking up new ways/ looking toward new days" and Arnold Adoff and John Steptoe's *Outside Inside Poems* Lothrop, 1981 ("Outside my pants are torn and there is a scrape on my knee/ Inside an eagle takes off from its nest and flies free").

Real stories and insightful poems are now being told by talented black writers. Yet, according to Sims, the number of children's books produced by black writers is dwindling yearly rather than keeping pace with the needs of the Black population today. (In 1979, 16 major publishers brought out only seven books by black writers.) Thus without greater support by both those who publish and those who purchase, a great wealth of black experience in America will remain unexplored. The novels of Virginia Hamilton are just beginning to reveal the rich complexities and possibilities of the black experience. Hamilton's theme, she says, is based on the fact that characters are black and share the black experience of being up "against the wall," the entrenched American way of life; and to Hamilton, this is the black experience—the black child surviving and enduring and going beyond growing in spirit so that he or she sees no difficulties in living with pride.[16]

Children need more books like Hamilton's Newbery Award winning *M.C. Higgins the Great*, 1974, that depict the values and feelings of the many different groups of black people within the greater American culture. They need to know more about the biracial family in America and about the mixture of native American and black heritage in families, as Hamilton has depicted in *Arilla Sun Down* (Greenwillow, 1976), and her husband, Arnold Adoff, has

written about his own bi-racial marriage in poem picture books, *Black is Brown is Tan* (Harper, 1973) and *All the Colors of the Race* (Lothrop, 1982). They need books like Hamilton's most recent *Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush* (Philomel, 1982) that tap the roots of African folklore (the mysteries of extrasensory presence), in depicting issues of contemporary realism (sexual awakening, child abuse, mental retardation) at the same time displaying authenticity of black speech patterns and black family life.

In addition to the existing books of African life, such as Tom Shachtman's striking photographic picturebook, *Growing Up Masai* (Macmillan, 1981), children need to know more about the black child's heritage in areas like the West Indies. They need more books like Susan Cooper's *Jethro and the Jumbie* (Atheneum, 1979). They need to see Bontemps and Hughes' *Popo and Fifina* in print once again. They need to know more about black children in early American life and about today's black children in higher socio-economic levels, as Walter Dean Myers presents, with humor and sensitivity in *Won't Know Till I Get There* (Viking, 1982). They need to know more about the black person's contribution to American culture, as James Haskin's recent book for older children, *Black Theater in America* (Crowell, 1982), demonstrates. They need more books which portray bi-racial friendships, as Lucille Clifton has shown in *The Boy Who Didn't Believe in Spring* (Dutton, 1973) and more recently in *My Friend Jacob* (Dutton, 1980); for to quote Milton Meltzer, "You cannot deal with black Americans without dealing with white Americans. Black life and white life in America are profoundly affected by one another. Their experience is inseparable."[17] And because of this very factor of inseparability, children today need teachers who can maintain a delicate balance in dealing with the dilemmas of censorship.

We expose children to flawed books like *Epaminondas* and we threaten the self esteem of black readers and the attitudes of white ones. We remove such books and we raise similar possibilities for any number of controversial books to follow. We influence writers to revise books in the light of modern social attitudes, as has already occurred with both P.L. Travers' *Mary Poppins* (Harcourt, 1934) and Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Knopf, 1964), and we limit the freedom of future writers. We reject revisionist solutions, and we are faced with embarrassing relics of the past. We select books of the black child written by white writers, and we are left with incomplete, even misleading portraits of black families. We select books of the black child produced only by the black writers, and we limit the artistic vision of the non-black writer.

Yet, in the 80's with an essentially de-segregated society and so many more books (including revised editions) providing a positive image of the black child, we know that the teacher's perspective

extends far beyond the sociological stance of the 40's and 50's (that books shape white attitudes and can be written to help eliminate prejudice), even beyond the psychological position of the 60's and 70's (that books shape a black child's self image and can be used to undo the damage of discrimination), that it could rest today with the child's right to demand and receive the truth and with the hope that all books on the library shelf could help provide children with a better historical and critical perspective. For all books cannot be revised, nor should they be; that is to obliterate the past. And it is through examining the past that we learn more about ourselves.

Little Black Sambo tells today's child something about both English and American attitudes toward the people of Africa and India at the turn of the century. Hogan's version of *Epaminondas* reveals an early 20th century society in America forcing an entire group of people into subservient positions and then expecting even the children to perform minstrel show routines in literature. *Bright April* and *Sounder* explain how attitudes or social mores have changed through the decades. Konigsberg's *Jennifer* illustrates the value of books by black authors in depicting the total experience of the black child. And books like Clifton's *Sonora Beautiful* (Dutton, 1981), a story of a white family, indicates that the black writer, and by extension, any writer, given sensitivity, interest, ability, and knowledge, can write about any child.

All books are needed today, not because any one book will ever begin to tell the real or the entire story of the black child (for no one writer of either race could possibly achieve this), nor because any one book avoids all the possibilities of censorship (for any book is always a potential target of someone's dissent), but because only when children are exposed to all contingencies will children of all races have a more complete picture, the best of the past informing the future, the best of the present informed by the past.

Notes

[1] *Education for Democracy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 120.

[2] *Down the Rabbit Hole* (New York: Atheneum, 1972), p. 158.

Both reviews reprinted in *Nicodemus and the Little Black Pig*, reprinted edition, 1936, unpaged.

[3] This and subsequent quotes, unless otherwise indicated, refer to personal interviews or correspondance with author-illustrators. Credle (1981), Keats (1979), Konigsberg (1980), and Mayer (1980).

[4] Lee Bennett Hopkins, *More Books By More People* (New York: Citation Press, 1974), p. 49.

[5] Eva Knox Evans, "The Negro in Children's Fiction," *Publisher's Weekly* CXL (August 30, 1941), 650.

[6] Quoted in Alice Brooks McGuire, "The Minority Image in Books for Youth: Evolution and Evaluation," in *Reading, Children's Books, and Our Pluralistic Society*, ed. Harold Tanyzer (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1972), p. 54.

[9]Council on Interracial Books for Children, Racism and Sexism Center for Education, *Human and Anti-Human Values in Children's Books: A Content Rating Instrument for Educators and Concerned Parents*. New York: Council on Interracial Books for Children, Inc., 1976, p. 56.

[10]Nancy Larrick, "The All-White World of Children's Books," *Saturday Review* (September 11, 1965), p. 64.

[11]Sharon Bell Mathis, "Who Speaks for a Culture?" in *Reading, Children's Books, and Our Pluralistic Society*, ed. Harold Tanyzer. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1972, p. 31.

[12]Charlotte Huck, *Children's Literature in the Elementary School* (New York: Holt, 1976), p. 505.

[13]Ray Anthony Shepard, "Adventures in Blackland with Keats and Steptoe," *Interracial Books for Children* 3 (Autumn, 1971), pp. 2-3.

[14]Rosalie Black Kiah, "Profile: Eloise Greenfield," *Language Arts* (September, 1980), p. 659.

[15]Jean Chall, "Blacks in the World of Children's Books," *The Reading Teacher* 32 (1979), 527-33.

[16]*The Horn Book* (August, 1977), p. 407.

[17]Virginia Hamilton, "Thoughts on Children's Books, Reading and Ethnic America," in *Reading, Children's Books, and Our Pluralistic Society*, ed. Harold Tanyzer. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1972, p. 63.

[18]Milton Meltzer, "The Possibilities of Non Fiction: A Writer's View," *Children's Literature in Education*, 11 (Fall, 1980), p. 112.

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Love Is

Love has no right
nor wrong:
it simply is, like the perfect poem
which gives structure
and meaning
that cannot be put in other words.
Explication may fit a classroom scene
but only two
need seek the logic here.

Lionel D. Wyld
Rhode Island

Selected, Annotated Bibliography of 19th Century Afro-American Literature for High School Students

Rennie Simson

When Alex Haley's novel *Roots* first appeared a critic for the *Syracuse Herald Journal* made the following observation:

> Haley has succeeded in confronting Americans with our history of slavery in a way never done before. At last one reads of real people who were real slaves. We are confronted, too, with the fact of the slave ownership of Presidents Washington and Jefferson, though few Americans have thought in the past of "Massa George Washington," as Haley's ancestors referred to him.

If we as readers are finally reading about "real people who were real slaves" it is *our* fault, not that of Black American writers. All through the 18th and 19th centuries Black Americans wrote of their experiences in this country, but we have not been listening. It seems imperative at a time when racial polarity again threatens to overwhelm our society, that we help our students attain a sense of history as well as a respect for the intellectual contributions of Black authors by exposing students to the works of these writers. We must cease distorting the views and knowledge of our students via the sin of omission. The books listed in this annotated bibliography should be of assistance to those instructors who wish to avail themselves and their students of 19th Century Afro-American literature.

Bontemps, Arna. *Great Slave Narratives*

> This book includes the complete narratives of Gustavus Vassa, James W.C. Pennington, and William and Ellen Craft. Bontemps prefaces this work with a particularly fine introduction examining the place of slave narratives in American literary history. *Beacon Press*

Brown, William Wells. *Clotel*

> The subtitle of *Clotel (The President's Daughter)* gives a good insight into the central focus of the book. *Clotel*, the first novel written by an Afro-American (1853), focuses on the fate of Clotel, the daughter of Thomas Jefferson and his slave mistress. Clotel's short and unhappy life ends in suicide on a bridge crossing the Potomac River within sight of the government buildings of Washington, D.C. Brown uses excerpts from Jefferson's writings to underscore the irony of Clotel's fate. *Irvington: Citadel: Macmillan*

The Escape

As *Clotel* was the first novel published by an Afro-American so *The Escape* was the first play published by an Afro-American (1858). The play, sub-titled *A Leap for Freedom*, centers on the love story of two slaves, Glen and Melinda, who manage to escape to Canada. Brown uses satire very effectively especially in depicting the forms of Christianity practiced by some slaveholders.

Chesnutt, Charles. *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories*

Chesnutt's second volume, sub-titled *Stories of the Color Line*, focuses attention on a variety of situations and experiences unique to Black Americans. In "The Wife of His Youth" and "A Matter of Principle" he effectively satirizes light skinned Blacks who emulate white society and look down on their dark skinned brothers and sisters. He injects humor in his depiction of the clever masking of a slave in "The Escape of Grandison," but he also treats such serious topics as lynching and the white parent - black child relationship in "The Sheriff's Children." *Irvington; Univ. of Michigan Press*

Douglass, Frederick. *The Narrative of Frederick Douglass*

Probably the best known of Douglass' three autobiographies, this one was published in 1845 and was widely circulated by the abolitionists. Still widely read today it details Douglass' life from birth to the time immediately following his escape to the North (which is glossed over quickly to protect escape routes and people involved in helping slaves escape). A major theme of this autobiography is Douglass' determination to gain and maintain his self respect. Frequent analogies are drawn between slaves and animals to emphasize the dehumanizing aspects of slavery. Douglass asserts his manhood at the age of sixteen when he successfully beats a slave breaker to whose care he has been entrusted by his owner. *Penguin; Harvard Univ. Press; Doubleday*

Dunbar, Paul. *Sport of the Gods*

An anti-pastoral story, this novel with its circular setting — South, North, South — shows the difficulties of Afro-American life in all parts of the country. The myth of the fond relationship between black servant — white master so beloved by the readers of Thomas Dixon and Thomas Nelson Page, is exposed for the sham it really is when Berry Hamilton, the loyal Black butler (and former slave) of the wealthy Oakleys is falsely accused by them of robbery and sentenced to prison. In his absence his family moves to Harlem to start anew, but instead is destroyed by an environment which they cannot comprehend and adapt to. The conclusion of the novel finds Berry (after his release) and his wife back in the South. Both they and the Oakleys have been psychologically destroyed by the devasting relationship between black and white. *Arno; Dodd; Mnemosyne*

Complete Poems of Paul Lawrence Dunbar

First published in 1926, the volume contains all of the separate volumes of poetry *(Lyrics of Lowly Life, Lyrics of the Hearthside, Lyrics of Love and Laughter* and *Lyrics of Sunshine and Shadow)* which Dunbar published. His folk poetry as well as his poetry of social protest are both included. *Dodd*

The Strength of Gideon and Other Stories

Like Chesnutt's stories Dunbar's include a variety of topics; some are humorous plantation stories, but most are stories of social criticism, both direct and subtle. His stories criticizing the prejudice of the North, which he knew well, are very moving and preceptive. He particularly deplored attempts to manipulate the Black man politically as can be seen in "Mr. Cornelius Johnson, Office Seeker." *Arno*

Forten, Charlotte. *The Journal of Charlotte Forten*

Published long after her death Forten's journal details her life between 1854 and 1864 during which period her experiences took her from the schoolrooms of Salem, Massachusetts to the sea islands of South Carolina to teach former slaves. A daughter of the wealthy Forten family of Philadelphia, she was sent to school at the age of sixteen to Salem because her father deemed the educational opportunities in Philadelphia inadequate for a young Black woman. Bright and well respected, Forten retained severe misgivings about the sincerity of her white Salem classmates who frequently ignored her when they met her on the street. After the Civil War she was very impressed by the desire of young (and old) ex-slaves to obtain an education and devoted herself to aiding them in in getting one. *Norton*

Harper, Frances. *Iola Leroy*

Long considered the first novel published by an Afro-American woman (it has recently been replaced in this category by *Our Nig* - 1859), *Iola Leroy* is the story of a very light skinned Black woman who had no knowledge of her Black ancestry until her sale as a slave upon the sudden death of her father. The saga of her life takes her both North and South and Harper shows the difficulties encountered by a young Black woman before, during and after the Civil War. Iola finds her dignity and self respect as a productive member of the Black race. *AMS Press*

Hopkins, Pauline. *Contending Forces*

Most of the works of this prolific and talented 19th Century writer were published at the turn of the century in the *Colored American Magazine* of which she became literary editor in 1904. *Contending Forces* is her only work to have been published in book form. It traces the lives of the Montfort family who, like the Leroys of Harper's novel, are suddenly remanded to slavery upon the death of the white husband-father. The bereaved widow commits suicide in preference to becoming a slave and the remainder of the novel traces the lives of their descendants. Their one son was bought and taken away by an Englishman and their second son was befriended by a Black family in New Hampshire whose daughter he married. The remainder of the novel focuses on the offspring of these sons. *Univ. of Illinois Press; AMS; Arno*

Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

One of the very few slave narratives written by a woman, Jacob's narrative is a powerful testimonial to the sexual abuses to which an attractive young slave girl was exposed. When she was but fifteen her master, a Mr. Flint, began to whisper "foul words" into her ear. To escape his undesired advances, she became mistress of another white

man and bore him two children. Still Flint persued her and short of rape used every means possible to obtain her sexual favors. She finally resorted to hiding for seven years in her grandmother's attic to avoid any further contact with him. Jacobs details her reactions to sexual victimization in a way no man could have done. *Harcourt Brace*

Webb, Frank. *The Garies and Their Friends*

The third novel (1857) published by an Afro-American is set in the North rather than the South. Webb's Philadelphia is hardly a city of brotherly love. The Garies, a racially mixed family, move to Philadelphia from the South so their relationship can be legalized and their children made their lawful heirs. There they meet the Ellises and Mr. Walters, independent, self employed, successful Black people. The lives of the Ellises and Garies are upset by a Dickensian villain, George Stevens, who plots their destruction. The climax of the novel is a race riot, the first depiction of such a scene in Afro-American fiction. With humor, sensitivity and excellent characterizations Webb may well have written what may be the most neglected, yet most outstanding Afro-American novel of the 19th Century. *AMS; Arno*

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Coming Home

Heat presses
this valley
where gypsy moths
have eaten,
have died,
leaving trunks
yet called trees.
The sun glints off
roofs and windows
from the development
in what was Duggan's Field.
The train
passes shorter,
caboose blue,
not red.
The horizon
is blocked
by an atomic plant.
Yet, it's the same place
they declare.

JoAnne Zywna Kerr
Maine

Three Early Censors: Bowdler, Comstock, and Talmage

Ken Donelson

> There is a hydra-headed evil, malignant, unresting, yet, for the most part, invisible; allying itself with kindred destructive agencies; subsidizing the strongest appetites and passions; making the youth of the land its especial victims, sparing neither high nor low, dragging them by thousands to mental, moral, and even physical disease and death; existing from time immemorial, but increasing year by year till it has reached gigantic proportions; a frightful pestilence walking in darkness, a horrible destruction wasting at noonday! . . . It enthrones the lowest pleasures as the highest good; its object is the promotion of unchastity, the disparagement of virtue, the corruption of the young; its modes of operation are manifold, though unseen. Some of its physical results are discussed in medical works; its mental wrecks appear, to some extent, in the appalling statistics of insanity; but the wide-spread moral ruin, the sorrows, the crimes, the shames, — these are beyond the power of figures to compute . . . It needs no Augustine to tell us that an obscene book, song, picture, act, instrument, once guiltily imprinted on the memory, can never be erased.
>
> [Homer B. Sprague, "Societies for the Suppression of Vice," *Education* 3 (September 1882): 70.]

Fiction had long been a concern of adults, particularly fiction read by young people. Mrs. Bloomgrove, a deservedly forgotten novelist of the late eighteenth century, wrote her girl readers that novels tend to "excite romantic notions, while they keep the mind void of ideas, and the heart destitute of sentiment." The March 10, 1798, *Weekly Magazine* lamented the widespread popularity of novels among young women, for "Novels not only pollute the imaginations of young women, but likewise give them false ideas of life, which too often make them act improperly; owing to the romantic turn of thinking they imbibe from their favorite studies." To insure the sanctity of the young mind, the Massachusetts Board of Education announced their plan to provide leisure reading material for children and adults to district school libraries, but the lists included no fiction and no poetry. Novels so terrified adults that even by the late 1800's novels were discouraged as widely as possible although they could not be forbidden, though some would have preferred that had they had the power.

> There is no such enemy to firm and intelligent study as the unrestricted habit of devouring novels. Hold that in check, therefore, from the beginning. From the beginning, determine that for every hour of novel reading in a day, you will read for an hour something of some worth besides the excitement of the hour. [E. E. Hale, *What Career? Ten Papers on the Choice of a Vocation and the Use of Time*, Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1878.]

Even teachers, who might have been expected to want students to read almost anything, objected to the reading of fiction. The principal of a large academy in 1899 was quoted as saying, "The voracious devouring of fiction commonly indulged in by patrons of the public library, especially the young, is extremely pernicious and mentally unwholesome." ["Monthly Reports from Public Librarians upon the Reading of Minors: A Suggestion," *Library Journal* 24 (August 1899): 479.] The *Library Journal* is loaded with worries about novel reading, particularly that of young adults and children, from its first volume in 1876 until considerably past 1900. Librarians, and other critics, commonly use pejorative words like *pernicious* (the favorite word), *devouring, filth, degrading, paralyzing, disease, dissipation, bane, contaminated, bad, disastrous, injurious*, and *vulgarity*. The high point, or low, of the attacks on fiction was an editorial in the *Journal of Education* for April 13, 1893 (pp. 232-233) lauding the "modest and sensible youths and maidens of the Oakland High School who revolted against studying an unexpurgated edition of Hamlet!" and why were they so honored for so objecting to the study of *Hamlet* in its naked form?

> The indecency of Shakespeare in the complete edition is brutal. They are more than indelicacies, they are indecencies. They are no part of Shakespeare's thought, have no connection with the play, and can be eliminated with as little jar as could the oaths of a modern slugger. Indeed, Shakespeare's vulgarity was, to all intents and purposes, profanity, scattered promiscuously through the lines with no more meaning than so many oaths . . . it is brutal to allow youths and maidens to use an unexpurgated edition whether they study in mixed classes or each sex by itself. It is not that the boys and girls in the Oakland High School studied together, for the revolt would have been the same had such senseless vulgarity been studied by either alone.

The attack on Shakespeare for his vulgarity should hardly surprise anyone who has glanced at Eric Partridge's *Shakespeare's Bawdy* or who has heard of Thomas Bowdler and Bowdler's ten-volume *Family Shakespeare* (1818). Bowdler worried all his life about filth, particularly about the filth in Shakespeare, and *Family Shakespeare* was his attempt to "exclude from this publication whatever is unfit to be read aloud by a gentleman to a company of ladies . . . My object is to enable him to do so without incurring the danger of falling un-

awares among words and expressions which are of such a nature as to raise a blush on the cheek of modesty . . . ." No one doubted Bowdler's sincerity, but his pruning or emasculating of Shakespeare seem overly delicate today and doubtless seemed slightly odd to some readers even then. Bowdler deleted the drunken porter scene in *Macbeth* because he thought it pointless and indecent, and he eliminated everything about Falstaff's character that made him Falstaff, his liveliness, his drinking, his wenching, his wit, his honesty, his roguery, his total character. Bowdler took one lovely passage from *Romeo and Juliet* where Juliet waits for Romeo and reduced it to one line and thereby removed poetry and power.

One of the major concerns of Anthony Comstock and most other censors of the time was the Dime Novel, a 16-page to 32-page book about wild adventures in the West, detectives, sports, mysteries, and more. Dime Novels may never have been great literature, but they were never so intended. They were popular with boys and men and some women, but the primary audience was male. First appearing in June 1860 with the publication of Mrs. Ann S. Stephens' *Malaeska: The Indian Wife of the White Hunter*, Dime Novels sold almost beyond belief, with *Malaeska* selling something better than 65,000 copies. But when the eighth appeared, E.S. Ellis' *Seth Jones: or, the Captives of the Frontier*, Dime Novels became a rage. *Seth Jones* sold at least 500,000 copies over the years in the United States and it was translated into ten other languages. Dime Novels were admittedly melodramatic and formulaic, loaded with stock characters doing incredibly predictable things (much as television does today or B-movies did many years ago), but they were moral in the absolute sense, no profanity, no immorality, and evil was punished and good rewarded at the end of each tale.

Librarians and teachers disliked Dime Novels almost as much as boys loved Dime Novels. The *Library Journal* and other publications of the time had many articles lambasting Dime Novels and attempting to suggest ways in which boys could be brought to better books, for example, Ellen M. Cox's "What Can Be Done to Help a Boy to Like Good Books after He Has Fallen into the 'Dime Novel Habit'?" [*Library Journal* 20 (April 1895): 118-119], Theodore C. Burgess' "Means of Leading Boys from the Dime Novel to Better Literature," [*Library Journal* 21 (April 1896): 144-147], and Robert Peabody Bellows' "The Degeneration of the Dime Novel," [*Writer* 12 (July 1899): 97-99].

The Dime Novel was attacked for many reasons, its sensationalism and improbabilities and purple prose, but many attacks were of the monkey see-monkey do variety. Many critics and educators were convinced that readers who read wild things went out and did those wild things, never wondering if that wasn't an overly simplistic explanation or questioning whether boys in trouble might not

attempt to excuse their evil deed by blaming books, particularly if the critics' close questioning revealed that the questioners wished to believe that the books were as guilty, if not more guilty, than the boys. The *Library Journal* for March-April 1883 (p. 57) carried an excerpt from the *New York Herald* about the latest recorded victim of the Dime Novel, a fourteen-year-old boy "who shot himself during a period of mental aberration caused by reading dime novels," and the May 1884 *Literary News* (p. 25) carried the sad story and frightening indictment of four Milwaukee lads, the oldest not over fifteen, who "were lead by reading dime-novels to organize themselves into a gang of freebooters. They secured an outfit and prepared to start for the West, where they intended to emulate the deeds of the noted cowboys and Buffalo Bill." No wonder, I suppose that the Honorable Able Goddard, member of the New York Assembly, proposed a bill in 1883 which read in part:

> Any person who shall sell, loan, or give to any minor under sixteen years of age any dime novel or book of fiction, without first obtaining the written consent of the parent or guardian of such minor, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor or, punishable by imprisonment or by a fine not exceeding $50.

The bill did not pass, but there were supporters.

These then were the times when Anthony Comstock (1844-1915) appeared on the American scene; Dime Novels, sentimental and improbable novels for women and girls, and magazine fiction appealing to both sexes, though critics would argue the material was unfit for anyone of decent mind and spirit.

Comstock came from a religious family and before he was eighteen he had raided a saloon to drive out the devil and the drinkers. In the Civil War Comstock organized a group against smoking and drinking and evil literature, mostly novels which he almost universally regarded as tools of Satan. He married a woman ten years his senior, which would probably be of no particular point but it possibly reflected his attitude toward sex and the purity, always the total inherent purity of women. Their one child died before she was six months old, and there is considerable question whether Comstock ever touched his wife in "that way," as some would have it, ever again. He revered children all his life, mostly for their purity and the attempt to keep them pure, forever if possible, and the attempt to remove anything bordering on impurity from contact with children became his life's work.

In an interview with May Alden Hopkins ["Birth Control and Public Morals: An Interview with Anthony Comstock," *Harper's Weekly* 60 (May 22, 1915): 489-490], Comstock told of his first encounter with bad literature in New York City:

> My attention was first drawn to the publication of vice books forty-three years ago when I was a clerk here in New York City.

There was in existence at that time a kind of circulating library where my fellow clerks went, made a deposit, and received the vilest of literature, and after reading it, received back the deposit or took other books. I saw young men being debauched by this pernicious influence.

On March 2nd 1872, I brought about the arrest of seven persons dealing in obscene books, pictures, and articles. I found that there were 169 books some of which had been in circulation since before I was born and which were publicly advertised and sold in connection with articles for producing abortion, prevention of conception, articles to aid seductions, and for indiscreet and immoral use. I had four publishers dealing in these arrested and the plates for 167 of these books destroyed. The other two books dropped out of sight. I have not seen a copy of one of them for forty years.

Earlier in June 1871, Comstock had been outraged by repeated violations of Sunday Closing laws by saloons in his neighborhood and he reported them to the police who ignored him. Comstock learned a lesson about police protection and about the futility of fighting city hall alone.

So armed with the Lord's help and his own strength, Comstock approached Robert R. McBurney, secretary of the YMCA in 1872, asking for McBurney's and the YMCA's help in fighting evil. With the help of McBurney and three other prominent men, William E. Dodge, Jr., Morris K. Jesup, and J. Pierpont Morgan, Comstock founded the Society for the Suppression of Vice of New York in that year, and Comstock was off and about his work. But he was not satisfied with local help or local regulations, and he went to Washington D.C. in 1873 to urge the passage of a Federal Statute against obscenity and abortion and contraceptive devices. The *New York Herald* attacked him in February 24, 1873, and Comstock wrote in his diary, "They may do and say what they please about me, but if they interfere with my work, *then beware*. Comstock did nothing. The Master's work everything." [Heywood Broun and Margaret Leech, *Anthony Comstock: Roundsman of the Lord*, New York: Boni, 1927] While the bill had problems in the House, it speedily passed in the Senate, and on Thursday, March 6, 1873, Comstock was commissioned a Special Agent of the Postmaster General to make arrests in the traffic of obscene literature, without salary until the Postmaster General insisted in 1906.

With the new law and Comstock's driving zeal and energy, he succeeded in confiscating and destroying bad literature and imprisoning evil authors and publishers almost beyond belief. By 1914, Comstock had caused the arraignment of 3,697 people with 2,740 convicted or pleading guilty with total fines of $237,134.30 and prison sentences totaling 565 years, 11 months, and 20 days. In the

last year of his life, 1915, Comstock added another 176 arrests and 141 convictions. What Comstock sometimes failed to add—though he often did mention it — was the fifteen suicides he also caused.

One of his more intriguing arrests was of D.M. Bennett accused of publishing *Cupid's Yokes*. The jurors were told to read only passages from the book marked by the prosecutor and to determine from them, and not the whole book, whether the book was obscene. District Attorney William P. Fiero addressed the jury and said in part, "Now, gentlemen, this case is not entitled 'Anthony Comstock against D. M. Bennett'; this case is not entitled 'The Society for the Suppression of Vice against D. M. Bennet.' It is the United States against D. M. Bennett, and the United States is one great society for the suppression of vice." Judge Benedict in charging the jury cited the Cockburn test of obscenity and added:

> Now, gentlemen, I have given you the test; it is not a question of whether it would corrupt the morals, tend to deprave your minds or the minds of every person; it is a question whether it *tends* to deprave the minds of those open to such influences, and into whose hands a publication of this character might come. It is within the law if it would suggest impure and libidinous thoughts in the young and inexperienced.

Comstock thoroughly approved of Cockburn's test of obscenity and lovingly cites it in his "Vampire Literature," [*North American Review* 153 (August 1891): 168] and adds, "This test of obscenity has been adopted and affirmed in every case of importance tried since upon both continents, until it is now the settled test for a jury."

Comstock attacked so much in his life with unquestionable sincerity and unquestioned zeal that at times it would seem there was little that might not have come under his eagle eye potential material for litigation. He attacked Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, free love, sex information, gambling, lotteries, prostitution, drinking, smoking, nudes used in art classes, hoochie-coochie dances at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, Havelock Ellis' *Erotic Symbolism*, and almost everything else that moved or stood still. He was the official United States Representative, appointed by President Wilson, to the International Purity Congress at the San Francisco Exposition in 1915. His attitude toward any form of contraceptive device was typical of the time, but his convictions were strong and apparently straight from God. When asked whether contraceptive devices should be lumped together with pornographic objects, Comstock answered, "If you open the door to anything, the filth will pour in and the degradation of youth will follow." Later when urged to consider the problem of a woman whose life would be endangered should she become pregnant, Comstock added, "Can they not use self-control? Or must they sink to the level of beasts," a comment which says more about Comstock than about contraception or other people.

Comstock always worried most about young people and what evil material would do to them. That was obvious in books like *Frauds Exposed; or How the People are Deceived and Robbed, and Youth Corrupted. Being a Full Exposure of Various Schemes Operated Through the Mails, and Unearthed by the Author in a Seven Years' Service as a Special Agent of the Post Office Department and Secretary and Chief Agent of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice* (1880), *Gambling Outrages; or Improving the Breed of Horses at the Expense of Public Morals* (1887), *Morals Versus Art* (1887).

His most famous or at least most accessible book is *Traps for the Young* (1883). By traps, Comstock meant the traps the devil sets for young people, and the traps are many; light literature (anything sensational, e.g., Dime Novels or story papers), newspaper advertisements, bars for drinking, gambling, pool playing, obscenity by mail, quack medicine, free love and anyone who advocates it, and artistic works (fine arts, fine literature especially the classics in translation, photos of art). Much of what he has to say is generally interesting, but I'll confine my few remarks to literature (though I'll be tempted to digress and I'll give in occasionally). In the Preface, Comstock says that good reading refines and elevates and enobles and makes us strive for lofty things, but evil reading debases and perverts us, and the community is filled with "pernicious literature." "This book," Comstock writes, "is a plea for the moral purity of children."

The third chapter, "Half-Dime Novels and Story Papers," contains most of his attacks on pernicious literature of the time. Comstock argues that these forms of literature are sometimes silly and insipid, but more commonly they are coarse and dangerous, more so than parents and other adults might realize. Dime Novels, especially, are according to Comstock particularly vile, for they are filled with improbable but exciting incidents and outlaws painted sympathetically and they may tempt boys to leave home to do evil. He lovingly cites a young boy accused of attempting to wreck a railway train who explained his actions by saying that he'd been reading about a trainwreck and wanted to see it in action. Another example cited by Comstock, but hardly the only other example, was about a twenty-one year old boy.

> A few months ago, in a small town in Massachusetts, I arrested a young man about twenty-one years of age for sending most obscene and foul matter by mail. He was in the field with his father at work at the time of arrest. He desired to go to his room to change his apparel before going to court. While in his room, and up to the moment of the finding of a pile of these vile five-cent story-papers in one corner, he had been perfectly cool and stolid. When these

were discovered, he started as though a nest of adders had been opened, and said with great feeling, 'There! that's what has cursed me! That has brought me to this!'

And Comstock concludes,

> Parents and teachers, you may look upon the dumb pages of these story-papers and think there is no harm in them. You may be indifferent, negligent, and careless. But I warn you against these leprous influences. They speak to many youthful minds like the piercings of a sword — a *poisoned* sword!

His worries about pool playing are equally honest and equally convincing.

> A noble mother in New York came to my office one day, and bursting into tears besought me to find her lost boy. She said, "H— ran away about a month ago. For two weeks we mourned him as dead. But that was not the worst of it. We have now discovered that he robbed his employer, and that an associate of his in the same department has been arrested and is in the Tombs. Then again," she said, "he stole $40 from a lady in my house, and last night my house was entered and robbed again, and I fear it is my poor boy. He was an only son, about seventeen years of age." Night after night I went through the pool saloons where he had been in the habit of playing. I saw lads from fourteen to eighteen years of age standing around these tables playing, with their glasses of wine, beer, and liquors displayed about them, and with cigars or cigarettes in their mouths, while some of them were so intoxicated that they could scarcely hold their cue in play. They would make wretched plays, while full-grown lookers-on would laugh and applaud their drunken antics.
>
> September 21, 1882, a prominent gentleman from Brooklyn came to our office for advice and help. His story was of his nephew, a bright lad of seventeen years, who had run away a week before, after robbing his own mother of a gold watch and silverware, and his uncle of $80 in cash. He had been crazed with this kind of pool.
>
> At this writing the search for this deluded boy is being prosecuted, to reclaim him if possible. (p. 129)

Equally convincing and equally melodramatic are Comstock's examples of the consequences of reading filthy circulars from the mails, of practicing the solitary crime of onanism, and of translations from the classics which are supposedly of worth to someone.

> In another school I found over one third of a department of over fifty girls under fifteen years of age, who had, or confessed to having had, the grossest obscenity. One of these, a little girl thirteen years of age, I found in her home. She, in my presence, went to a bureau drawer and brought a sealed package, and after opening it we found a quantity of the most debasing and foul-worded matter. The last heard from this child she was in a dying condition, the result of habits induced by this foul reading. (p. 139)

Fathers and mothers, look into your child's face, and when you see the vigor of youth failing, the cheek growing pale, the eye lustreless and sunken, the step listless and faltering, the body enervated, and the desire to be much along coming over your offspring; when close application to work or study becomes irksome, and the buoyancy of youth gives place to peevishness and irritability, then seriously look for a cause. It may not always be the case, but in many instances it will be found to come from secret practices, which have early in life sapped the health of mind and body.

An eminent professor in a Southern college, in writing to me a short time ago, said: "I am forced to the belief that seventy-five if not ninety per cent of our young men are victims of self-abuse."

Is not this awful curse to the young prevalent enough to command a remedy? to call for attention from parents? Go to the insane asylums and epileptic hospitals for a reply. Our youth are falling on every side. Lives that otherwise might shine as the stars in the firmament are shrouded with a veil of darkness, with horrors to the victim's mind which no pen can describe. (p. 154)

A gentleman familiar with Italian, having long resided in Italy, and a master of English literature (in which branch he was for several years a professor), writes to me the following: "You concede too much. The book you are really writing about is an English book, having no 'use in the literary world,' for you are writing about a translation. You seem to me to admit that an English version of Boccaccio has the rights of a classic. That is not true. The plea for freedom in the circulation of classics is good only for Boccaccio in the Italian original. The Translation is an English book, which no scholar wants, which nobody wants, for a literary or educational purpose. If there are scholars who want to know the beautiful Italian of Boccaccio, they must, of course, learn to read Italian. As a classic, I repeat, Boccaccio does not exist in the English language, and cannot exist in it — the English version cannot have a single classical feature of value. Furthermore, there are translations *and* translations. If, for an impure purpose, a man wished to vend a salacious Boccaccio, he could easily get a translation made that would altogether surpass the Italian in indecency. And what is true of Boccaccio is true of any other classical author in any other tongue. Unfortunately, all languages have impure classics; and if English indecency is prohibited, and foreign indecency (translated) permitted, there will be a large stream flowing in to fill the vacuum you are making by suppressing obscene books. There are no *translated classics*. Pope's Homer is an English book, with some Homer and more Pope. It would be a very absurd business to read Pope's Homer as a Greek classic; or for the matter of that, anybody's Homer. In short, Boccaccio in an English version has not the smallest claim to be exempted from the operation of the laws against obscene books. It is simply an English book made from a filthy Italian book. The translator can copyright his translation — a

test fact which settles the question, if it were not settled by simple common-sense. There has seldom been a more ridiculous and preposterous claim than that an English version of Boccaccio must be freely circulated in order that scholars may have a chance to read the fine old Florentine of the original. New York, April 25, 1883." (p. 174)

After Comstock, who was the premier censor of his time and the prototype of later moralistic censors, the work of Thomas De Witt Talmage (1832-1902) seems mild, but Talmage shared much of Comstock's vision and he enthusiastically supported the passage of Comstock's 1873 Federal Statute against pernicious literature, abortion, and contraceptive devices.

Talmage entered the ministry after graduating from college — the title of his graduation speech tells of his time and Talmage's drive for purity, "Moral Effects of Sculpture and Architecture" — and was first ministered in Belleville, New Jersey, and then worked up the ministerial ladder to the Central Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, the congregation totalled no more than thirty-five, but within four years his preaching style (*The National Cyclopedia of American Biography*, Vol. 4, p. 26, said it was a "theatrical character" and the *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 18, p. 288, called it "magnetic and rather sensational") led to a congregation of more than 5,000. Proof of his effective preaching style is that at one time his sermons were printed weekly in more than 3,500 newspapers across the country.

His books tended toward the theatrical, indeed Comstock attacked him in *Traps for the Young* for his sensationalism and theatricality, but they were deadly sincere, and the titles attest to their power and intent. *The Abominations of Modern Society* (1872), *The Night Sides of City Life* (1878), *Rum, The Worst Enemy of the Working Class* (1886), *Social Dynamite; or The Wickedness of Modern Society* (1889), and *Evils of the City* (1891). He edited numerous church journals, e.g., *The Christian at Work* (1873-1876), *The Advance* (1877-1878), and *Frank Leslie's Sunday Magazine* (1881-1889).

No matter what the title of what publication, Talmage attacked much the same things as Comstock, evil literature (especially that read or likely to be read by young people), drinking, gambling, abortion, contraceptive devices, sloth, bad habits, crime, glorification of criminals, and sin at large.

A few passages from *Evils of the Cities* (1891) will suggest much of the aim and content of Talmage's work and why he is virtually the culmination of everything that nineteenth century censorship had to offer readers by way of warnings about the evil effects of reading on the unwary.

You cannot afford to read a bad book, however good you are. You say, "The influence is insignificant." I tell you that the scratch of a pin has sometimes produced lockjaw. Alas, if through curiousity, as many do, you pry into an evil book, your curiousity is as dangerous as that of the man who would take a torch into a gunpowder mill merely to see whether it would really blow up or not... 'But,' you say, 'how can I find out whether a book is good or bad without reading it?' There is always something suspicious about a bad book. I never knew an exception — something suspicious in the index or style of an illustration. This venemous reptile almost always carries a warning rattle. (p. 58)

Why are 50 per cent of the criminals in the jails and penitentiaries of the United States today under twenty-one years of age! Many of them under seventeen, under sixteen, under fifteen, under fourteen, under thirteen. Walk along the corridors of the Tombs prison in New York and look for yourselves. Bad books, bad newspapers, bewitched them as soon as they got out of the cradle. Beware of all those stories which end wrong. Beware of all those books which make the road that ends in perdition seem to end in Paradise. (p. 54-55)

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Material Selection and Censorship: A Selected Bibliography

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Separate Seasons

Thirteen, undaunted,
Proud -
My daughter
Hangs my effigy
When I would water flowers
In her soul.

Somewhere my wisdom
Flaunts the seasons
In among our separate years.
The old March mosses
Fail the crocus
In my yard of dreams.

Mary M. Nyman
Massachusetts

Poet of the Year

At the fall convention held this year in Bedford, New Hampshire, the members of the New England Association of Teachers of English named Ian Veitenheimer of Derry, NH, Poet of the Year for 1983. Veitenheimer was one of five finalists in the competition who read their poems to the assembled English teachers at the Sheraton Wayfarer in Bedford on October 28. (A poem from each of the finalists is included in this issue. Ed. note.)

The Poet of the Year Competition, an annual feature of the NEATE fall convention, is the culmination of a year-long process which identifies the poet finalists from each of the New England states and brings those finalists together at the annual convention in the fall. The competition before the assembled teachers requires that each finalist read the poems submitted in competition and the Poet of the Year is chosen by ballot following the readings.

A staple convention feature since 1979, the poetry competition has identified five "Poets of the Year" since that date. They are: Eleanor Nudd of New Hampshire in 1979; Stephen Foley of Connecticut in 1980, Sister Franchon Burke of Massachusetts in 1981; Christine E. Hemp of Vermont in 1982; and, the present Poet of the Year, Ian Veitenheimer of Derry, New Hampshire.

The Poet of the Year competition is open to all English and Language Arts teachers in New England who are members of their state English or Language Arts associations or who are members of the New England Association of Teachers of English. Contestants are allowed to submit up to five previously unpublished poems in competition for the State Finalist Award which is presented following the judging of the poems on the state level. Finalists from each state are invited to read their poems in competition at the annual convention.

The chairman of the NEATE Poetry Competition announced the sixth call for entries in the Poet of the Year Competition for 1984. Rules for the contest are published in the *Newsletter* and *The Leaflet*. Contestants should send entries or inquiries to: NEATE Poetry Competition, c/o Paul B. Janeczko, chairman, 44 Mary Carroll Street, New Auburn, Maine 04210..

POET OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

Open to all teachers of English and Language Arts in New England who, as of January 1, 1984, are members of the New England Association of Teachers of English or one of its affiliate state organizations.

This contest is sponsored to stimulate the sharing of the creativity within the various organizations of English and Language Arts teachers in New England.

Two finalists will be chosen from among the entrants for each state organization. All state finalists will be invited to attend the Fall Conference of the New England Association of Teachers of English to read their poems at the evening session of the NEATE. All poems submitted by the finalists will be published in a volume of poetry to be made available at the Fall Conference.

Each finalist will receive three volumes of the poems submitted for judging by the finalists at the convention and a certificate of state award.

The winning contestant will receive, in addition, a certificate of award granted by The New England Association of Teachers of English recognizing that poet as the Poet of the Year.

No poems will be returned to the entrants unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Poetry Contest Rules

1. All poems must be submitted in English.
2. All poems submitted must be typed on a single sheet of standard-sized typing paper, one side only.
3. Each poem must be accompanied by the name and address of the poet and the name of the organization (NEATE or state affiliate) to which the poet belongs.
4. No more than five previously unpublished poems may be submitted by any poet.
5. Poems submitted for judging must be accompanied by a letter granting NEATE rights of publication.
6. All entries must be received by June 15, 1984, to be eligible for judging.
7. Poems should be submitted to NEATE POETRY COMPETITION CHAIRMAN, Paul B. Janeczko, 44 Mary Carroll Street, New Auburn, Maine 04210.

Information for Authors:

The Leaflet is published three times a year by the New England Association of Teachers of English, and prints articles on all facets and levels of English/Language Arts teaching. Now in its 83rd year, *The Leaflet* is the oldest of the journals dedicated to the teaching of English.

Editorial Policy: Articles about the teaching of English, especially in New England, are invited. Letters in response to recent articles are also welcome. *The Leaflet* no longer prints poetry except that of the finalists in the NEATE poetry competition. Submissions from classroom teachers and articles detailing classroom research are especially encouraged. See "Call for Manuscripts" for further information on special themes and requirements for forthcoming issues.

Manuscripts: Manuscripts should be 3-15 pages in length, typed on non-erasable paper, doubled-spaced (including quotations), and footnotes should be avoided whenever possible by including documentation within the text. Send one copy (the original) to the editorial address below and keep a copy for yourself. A self-addressed, stamped (with sufficient postage) envelope should be included to insure return of the manuscript. If you wish acknowledgment of receipt of the manuscript, enclose a self-addressed, stamped postcard or send the manuscript by registered mail. A decision concerning the manuscript should be reached within six weeks.

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